Victorian Autobiography, Child Study and the Origins of Child Psychology

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Introduction

It is no coincidence that there was unprecedented interest in childhood in the Victorian period. Peter Bowler has shown that Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) 'converted the scientific world to evolutionism.'[1] As Deborah J. Coon argues, this conversion instigated the revolutionary process of 'secularizing the soul . . . repackaging it . . . as the "self"', and thereby hastening the 'birth of psychology' in the late nineteenth century.[2] Carolyn Steedman has demonstrated that the clearest expression of the 'interiorized self' which was to replace the Christian soul is found in the idea of childhood in the nineteenth century.[3] The emergence of a specific psychology of the child, in the protean field of Child Study, was therefore inevitable in the final decades of the Victorian period.[4]

The same search for selfhood in childhood accounts for the proliferation of autobiographical accounts of the child's interiority which followed the pioneering opening chapters of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).[5] As Jonathan Loesberg asserts, '[a]utobiography is self-making.'[6] That so many Victorians wrote fictional and non-fictional autobiographies suggests that self-making was a vital process in the period. That many such autobiographies open with detailed accounts of childhood experience suggests that, for many authors, the self was made in childhood. Child psychology and its counterpart in autobiography flourish in the late Victorian period because to study childhood was to study the self in an era in which that self was newly necessary.

Although, as this suggests, *The Origin of Species* had a revolutionary effect, it was not Darwin's non-progressive model of evolution by natural selection, but other, progressive models which revolutionized Victorian culture.[7] This essay will argue that Child Study and autobiography of childhood experience are unmistakably an invention of the non-Darwinian

revolution, because they both attempt to construct a specific type of selfhood. Within the specifically progressive evolutionary world view of the late nineteenth-century, the Christian soul was replaced by a psychological self which was, likewise, fundamentally progressive.

In her analysis of the intersection between the emergent discipline of scientific Child Study and contemporaneous autobiographical accounts of childhood, Sally Shuttleworth observes, in passing, that '[t]he spur' for the invention of Child Study 'appears to have been evolutionary debates about language acquisition'.[8] This essay will demonstrate that the emergence of disciplines devoted to the study of childhood during the period betrays a widespread effort, sustained across discourses, to formulate a specifically progressive model of selfhood, and that language acquisition is the 'spur' for this effort because it offers a clear line dividing the developing child from the self which is its end. In other words, the fascination with language acquisition in Child Study and in autobiography of childhood experience epitomises the non-Darwinian revolution from which both discourses emerged.

Analyses of autobiographical work from the Victorian period have generally followed two major patterns which belie the significance of a progressive evolutionary model of childhood. Firstly, most critics focus largely on autobiographical work by men like Charles Darwin, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and John Henry Newman.[9] Jenny Bavidge has argued that 'authors of imaginative literature for children . . . [were] presumed to have a (childlike) insight into children's lives of feelings, [and] to be possessed of a unique ability to remember back into their own childhoods' in the period.[10] Many such authors were women.[11] To focus on the autobiographies of eminent Victorian men is therefore both to understate the centrality of childhood to the period's evolutionary discourse, and to disregard the prevalent view that children's authors had particular expertise in this area.

Secondly, those critics who do discuss autobiographies of childhood experience have largely focused on the extent to which a Victorian ideology of childhood can be read in such

work.[12] This essay will argue that the non-Darwinian revolution had a determining influence on the ideology of childhood, because it propagated that search for a progressive model of selfhood through which dedicated studies of childhood emerged in the late Victorian period.

To examine the role of progressive evolutionism on the invention of Child Study, and on autobiography of childhood experience, and to explore the characteristics of the ideology of childhood proliferated through these responses to the non-Darwinian revolution, this essay will discuss the work of one of the most successful authors of the late Victorian period, Frances Hodgson Burnett, in comparison with the work of the some of the most prominent practitioners of Child Study, and particularly the work of its leading pioneer in Britain, James Sully. Burnett was a prolific author, who wrote for a range of audiences, but she was, and remains, celebrated primarily for her novels for children.[13] As such, Burnett's autobiographical account of early childhood, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (1893), would have been considered at least as significant a contribution to debates about childhood as comparable accounts by more distinguished contemporaries. Through his major academic contribution to Child Study, *Studies of Childhood* (1895), and, more directly, through the many articles he contributed to such non-specialist journals as *Longman's Magazine,* Sully was perhaps the most effective advocate for the professionalization of Child Study in the Victorian period.[14]

Sully's work corroborates the suggestion that Burnett's views would have carried particular authority in Victorian debates about childhood. Although the claim that 'the grace of childhood may almost be said to have been discovered by the modern poet' is, inevitably, substantiated with reference to Wordsworth and Blake, it is clear that, from Sully's perspective, contemporary writers, including many women, have contributed work of more value for an evidence-based study of childhood.[15] George Sand receives particular attention in *Studies of Childhood* but Sully notes, regretfully, that'[s]ince this was written the authoress

of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* has shown us how clear and far-reaching a memory she has of her childish experiences.'[16] Burnett's most successful work is a metonym for her expertise. While, as Sully notes, '[t]he appearance of Darwin's name among those who have deemed the child worthy of study' gives status to the science of Child Study, the autobiographical work of experts like Burnett is the evidence based on which Child Study can claim to be scientific at all.[17]

Through an analysis of Burnett's autobiography, Sully's discussions of contemporary autobiographical work by Pierre Loti and George Sand, and contemporary psychological studies of childhood and of selfhood, this essay will argue that the origins of child psychology in the revolutionary period following the publication of *The Origin of Species* are evident in the function which childhood performs, as an origin for a progressive model of selfhood, in autobiography and Child Study of the era. For Burnett, and for Sully and his peers in the field of Child Study, the remembered child is the self before language. By acquiring language, and using it to articulate the child's experience, the adult resolves the disjunction between self and language which this Other self, the childhood self, represents. In other words, Child Study and Victorian autobiography present selfhood as the adult expression of a childhood impression of the self. Each thus informs the other to offer a model of selfhood in which the child is the origin to the adult self as an end.

The implications of this model extended far beyond the individual child or self under scrutiny. One of the most prominent alternatives to Darwinian evolutionism in the late nineteenth century was the theory that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny; that the development of the child recapitulates the development of the human species. Seen through this dominant theoretical filter, autobiographical and psychological studies of childhood as a progressive development towards adulthood are commensurate with studies of evolution as the progressive development of the human species. The recapitulation of progressive

individual development in the evolution of the human species suggests that Child Study was invented, and autobiography revolutionised, in response to the late nineteenth-century need for a progressive model of evolution, in which the human species retained its place as the high-point and end.

In 1855, Anna Jameson called for a view of the self in which childhood and adulthood were integrated. The seemingly paradoxical model of selfhood as a 'progressive whole', proposed by Jameson, is formulated in the symbiosis between Child Study and autobiography from which child psychology emerged.[18] The late nineteenth-century origins of child psychology offer a progressive model of selfhood, and thus illuminate the co-dependence of debates about human evolution and about child development in Victorian culture.

Autobiography and Child Study in the Victorian Period

As Richard Coe observes, '[e]very authentic account of childhood of necessity relies mainly upon memory'.[19] Of the problems this raises, 'the reliability (or arbitrary unreliability) of memory' was perhaps the most pressing for Victorian autobiographers, because of the intense scepticism with which memory was viewed in the psychology of the era.[20] William James, for example, insists that 'the object of memory is only an object imagined in the past . . . to which the emotion of belief adheres.'[21] George Stout and Wilhelm Wundt, James's peers in Britain and Germany respectively, were comparably sceptical.[22] Shuttleworth has noted that Victorians in general were also 'obsessed with the horror of the lie'.[23] Victorian autobiographers were consequently required to present a convincing defence against the serious imputation that their work was misleading.[24]

Burnett's defence is simply to refute the premise on which the charge is based. Perhaps capitalising on the credibility she enjoys as a prominent children's author, Burnett

declares that 'after all the years that have passed I remember with equal distinctness the thoughts which were in the Small Person's mind.'[25] Whatever psychology might have uncovered about memory in general does not apply to Burnett's memory, which is entirely reliable.

It suits the purpose of Child Study to accept such claims. Burnett would undoubtedly have been among those authors who, Sully claims, have a 'gift of sympathetic insight' into the child mind.[26] In 1891 Sully contributed an article about a recently published autobiography, Pierre Loti's *Le Roman d'un Enfant* (1890), to *Longman's Magazine,* in which he attributes to Loti the same powers of memory which Burnett will subsequently claim to authenticate her autobiography. Not only was the child Loti 'subject to powerful impressions which . . . remained indelibly graven on the memory'.[27] The narrative actually 'surpasses in retrospective reach all other records of childish experience' (p. 202).

As in *Studies of Childhood,* Sully invokes Darwin's name to lend scientific authority to such claims.[28] He points to the parallel between Loti's claim that 'the welling up of new childish emotion . . . causes the image of the moment to penetrate into the very texture of the mind, never to be dislodged', with the fact that 'Darwin tells us that he preserved to the end a picture of the exact aspect of the old tree or bank where, as a Cambridge undergraduate, he made a good capture of beetles' to validate the assertion that Loti has 'photographic registration of sense impressions' (p. 205). According to Sully's analysis, in *Le Roman d'un Enfant* Loti has offered the reader photographic, indelible and exceptionally early memories of childhood experience. For Sully as for Burnett, the charge of falsity or fictionality simply does not apply to the autobiographical memories of that select group of adults who retain a rare degree of identification with their childhood selves. Victorian psychologists are only lately beginning to receive recognition for their influence on Sigmund Freud. Without wishing to perpetuate the view that Freud's work had no antecedents, the idea that anyone's

mental processes are entirely reliable seems distinctly pre-Freudian, and unsustainable after Freud.

A second charge is less easily deflected, even before Freud, than the accusation of autobiographical deceitfulness. Coe claims that 'if there *is* any value in childhood experience, it lies in the fact that this experience is unique.'[29] If this had been the Victorian view, autobiographers of early childhood experience would have been unavoidably susceptible to the accusation of what Loesberg calls 'a morbid, debilitating overinvolvement with self'.[30] However, Victorian autobiographies of childhood experience were valuable largely insofar as that experience was *not* unique. Shuttleworth notes that 'the representative quality of the individual portrait' lends scientific authority to autobiography, in a fundamentally symbiotic relationship where Child Study, reciprocally, can use autobiographical memories of an individual's childhood experience as evidence for claims about the child mind in general.[31] This role in scientific study also enables the authors of autobiography of childhood experience to circumvent the accusation of self-obsession.

Thus, Burnett's autobiography is presented as 'an attempt to understand the working of the child mind by studying one particular example in detail',[32] but this is not only, or even primarily, to invest her work with scientific authority. Indeed, when Burnett claims that 'I might fairly entitle [the autobiography] "The Story of *Any* Child with an Imagination"', she does so to insist that she is accordingly 'absolved from any charge of the bad taste of personality' (p. vii). Burnett's autobiography is not a testament to the uniqueness of her childhood experience, and consequently to her debilitating obsession with herself. It is, instead, a source of enabling insight into the child we all once were.

Burnett's claim that her self-portrait is representative deflects the charge of 'personality', but, once again, such claims also suit the purposes of Child Study. Sully asserts that the mind uncovered in Loti's autobiography might be that of any child: Loti has, 'the true

feeling' not just for his *own* 'child-nature' but 'for child-nature' itself, and 'its original way of envisaging things' (p. 200). Likewise, although Sully's review of George Sand's autobiographical *Histoire de ma Vie* (1855) opens with the admission that '[t]he reader need not be told that the child who was to become the representative among modern women of the daring irregularities of genius was an uncommon child', 'close inspection shows that the untamed and untameable "oddities" were, after all, only certain common childish impulses and tendencies exalted, or, if the reader prefers, exaggerated.'[33]

Sully's analyses of autobiographical accounts of Sand's childhood experiences can consequently be reproduced in his seminal contribution to the study of the child mind itself. Although '[t]he early recollections of George Sand', which Sully summarises in 'A Girl's Religion' (1890), 'furnish what is probably the most remarkable instance of childish daring in fashioning a new religion', this account forms the basis and main evidence for Sully's analysis of children's religious beliefs in general in *Studies of Childhood*.[34] In the latter text, Sand's experiences illustrate, 'no doubt, a true *childish* aspiration towards the great Unseen, and also an impulse to invent a form of worship which should harmonise with and express the little worshipper's individual thoughts'.[35]

In short, then, 'the gifted child seems not less but more of a child because of his gifts.'[36] Exceptionally intense childhood experience—which Loti, Sand and Burnett all claim to have had—paradoxically epitomises childhood experience itself, and, conveniently, also leaves an indelible trace on the adult's memory. The claims of Sully's Child Study are validated because they are based on the testimony of authors who are both are extraordinarily able to recollect childhood, and representative in the experiences they had. Through this symbiosis with scientific discourse, the same authors circumvent many of the charges to which autobiographers in general were susceptible.

The Content of Children's Minds

The reciprocity between an emergent autobiography of childhood experience and the newly invented discipline of Child Study operated in the context of that revolution in humanity's understanding of itself propagated by progressive evolutionism. This context is palpable in the specifically progressive model of selfhood which is formulated at the interface between the two discourses. The defining features of the child as it is conceptualised in the study of language acquisition in both discourses enables a concept of growth as progress, and adult as end. The child in both autobiography and Child Study individuates, reflects and validates Victorian tenacity to the idea of progressive evolution.

Psychologists conducted their search for a progressive model of selfhood through what Sully, in a characteristically flippant essay entitled 'Baby Linguistics' (1884), calls 'venerable and learned disputes about the exact relation of speech to thought'.[37] Sully proposes that these disputes 'may some day be amicably settled by a reference to that most unimpeachable of testimonies, the babblings of infancy' (p. 111). He is fully aware that this is not an entirely 'fanciful . . . supposition' (p. 111). The earliest contributions to, and 'spur' for, Child Study—Darwin's 'Biographical Sketch of an Infant' (1877) and Hippolyte Taine's 'On the Acquisition of Language by Children' (1877)—were studies of the child's acquisition of language, and of what that process might say about the relationship between language and mind.[38] Nearly two decades later, in a major contribution to the now established discipline, William Preyer presents his analysis of the development of language in children as a response to exactly that question, '*Is there any thinking without words?*'[39]

The very title of Preyer's chapter, 'Development of the Child's Intellect Independently of Language', indicates that his answer to the question '*Is there any thinking without words?*' is a definite affirmative.[40] The introductory paragraph of the chapter actually dismisses the opposite view outright as a 'prejudice' which is 'at least unproved'.[41]

Sully's view is consistent with Preyer's. In *Studies of Childhood,* he argues that:

> [t]he growth of a child's speech means a concurrent progress in the mastery of words and in the acquisition of ideas. In this each of the two factors aids the other, the advance of ideas pushing the child to new uses of sounds, and the growing facility in word-formation reacting powerfully on the ideas, giving them definiteness of outline and fixity of structure.[42]

In 'Baby Linguistics', Sully claims that '[l]anguage is the "*instrument* of thought"' because a word can 'symbolise a whole class of objects' (p. 113). *Studies of Childhood* indicates that the instrument in this metaphor is both mechanical and musical. Language helps to produce thought, but it also expresses thought which has already taken place.

Two key points emerge from these studies. Firstly, the child is, by definition, without words. Secondly, the child is nevertheless capable of abstract thought. Such a view is entirely consonant with what Burnett remembers about her own childhood self. That Small Person is also capable of thought, and incapable of articulation. Burnett states that 'I recognise that [the Small Person] was too young to have had in her vocabulary the *words* to put her thoughts and mental arguments into—and yet they were there, as thoughts and mental arguments are there today' (p. 8-9). Similarly, recollecting 'the first social difficulty of the Small Person', in which she is confronted with 'the overwhelming problem of how to adjust perfect truth to perfect politeness', Burnett observes that '[l]anguage seems required to mentally confront this problem' (p. 10). Although 'the Small Person cannot have had words', Burnett insists that it is '*certain* that she confronted and wrestled with it' (p. 10, emphasis added). As in foundational texts in the emergent discipline of Child Study, the child in Burnett's autobiography is a mute receptacle for insight.

This idea of the child's inarticulate insight reveals the interdependence of ideologies of childhood and debates about progressive evolution in the Victorian period. Herbert Spencer, a prominent contributor to both debates, encapsulates their co-dependency in the

claim that ‘the genesis of knowledge in the individual, must follow the same course as the genesis of knowledge in the race’, ‘hence the fundamental reason why education should be a repetition of civilization in little’.[43] According to Bowler, this theory of recapitulation ‘was non-Darwinian in character because it encouraged the belief that evolution shares the progressive and teleological character of individual growth’, but ontogeny can only recapitulate a teleological phylogeny if childhood is conceived as a primitive stage in the progress towards adulthood as a goal and end-point.[44] The developmental model of progressive species evolution depends on a concept of the child as a narratable origin to a stable end.

When Burnett, Sully and so many others insist that the child has the capacity for thought but not for speech, they conceptualise the child in exactly these terms. They present the child as a primitive (because pre-linguistic) ancestor to the fully articulate adult. The child’s mind is imagined to be at a lesser stage in the progressive development of the human self. However, it is also imagined to elude the difficulties which the adult self encounters. Coe observes that, in autobiographies of childhood, ‘the use of rational language . . . destroys the child’s “intuitive” relationship with the world’, particularly because it ‘creates difference between the self and the object’: language is the difference between the adult and the child, and between the divided and the coherent self.[45] The child’s mind contains an impression of a self which is coherent because it is undivided by language.

This idea that the content of the child mind in some way transcends adult problems is clear in the conclusion to Taine’s foundational essay in Child Study, which insists that ‘all the shades of emotion, wonder, joy, wilfulness and sadness are expressed by differences of tone’ in the child’s ‘twitter’: ‘in this she equals or even surpasses a grown up person’.[46] By suggesting that the child has superior emotional range, Taine evokes that idea of the child’s purer receptiveness or sensitivity to impression which already had such a long history in

nineteenth-century literature.[47] This marks a small but telling departure from Darwin. Both Darwin and Taine associate emotions with the early stages of racial or individual development. However, Taine implies that to identify with childish emotion imbues the adult with the child's intuitive insight. Darwin asserts that the human expression of emotion supports 'the conclusion that man is derived from some lower animal form'.[48] For Darwin, the human expression of emotion is evidence of an animal ancestry which many considered debasing. For Taine, the adult expression of emotion is evidence of a childhood which many saw as transcendent.

Thus, when Preyer insists that the child 'shows plainly . . . [that] long before . . . the first successful attempt to express himself in articulate words . . . he combines ideas in a logical manner—i. e., he *thinks*', he not only insists that the child is capable of thought before he is capable of speech, but makes this claim in a context in which *what* the child thinks is seen by many as in some way superior to what the adult thinks.

Neither Taine nor Preyer refer explicitly to the child's impression of the self. However, the interchange between Child Study and autobiography aligns the objective of the former with the self-making function which the latter self-evidently performs. As Gurjeva argues, for psychologists 'the study of children was the study of the inception of the human mind.'[49] Scientists and authors study the same subject—the child-mind—in response to the same problem—the problem of the self in the era of evolution.

This is emphatically clear in 'Baby Linguistics', which concludes with an analysis of the relationship between the development of language and of self-consciousness. Sully focuses on a child called Clifford, to observe that the process of 'generalising', which has begun prior to language, is revealed by Clifford's misapplication of the word 'papa' (p. 116) to refer to all men. The correction of this error, in 'the act of distinguishing between his father and other men[,] followed rapidly . . . the first use of his own name' (p. 116). Thus, Clifford's

eventual ability to use the word ‘papa’ correctly ‘clearly involved a dim apprehension of the special relation of things to himself’ (p. 116): ‘the recognition of kindred grew out of self-reflection’ (p. 117). The articulation of perception by the child studied in ‘Baby Linguistics’ is analysed in term which equate the development of the child’s language with the development of adult selfhood.

The Adult Self as a Progressive Whole

Child Study defines the child in terms of both its ‘“intuitive” relationship with the world’ and its developing language.[50] The same characteristics define the representative Small Person of *The One I Knew the Best of All*. Burnett’s text clarifies how this ‘child’, reimagined in the emergence of scientific and autobiographical Child Study, invokes a coherent yet progressive adult self. The relationship between childhood and selfhood portrayed in *The One I Knew the Best of All* is one in which the adult simultaneously identifies with, and has progressed beyond, the child. Burnett can thus identify with the unified child mind, and, by articulating that mind, establish her own authorial adult self as the end to the developmental process which the child embodies.

The identity of retrospective adult with insightful child is figured in the Small Person’s precociously writerly sensitivity. Burnett wonders ‘[w]hether as impression-creating and mind-moulding influences, Literature or the Doll came first into [the Small Person’s] life’ (p. 44). Her answer is that:

> [i]t is not in the least likely she did not own dolls before she owned books, but it is certain that until literature assisted imagination and gave them character, they seemed only things stuffed with sawdust and made no special impression. (p. 44)

The Small Person is precociously responsive to story. This reveals that the author, Burnett, is latent within, and can therefore retrospectively identify with, that Small Person.

However, although Burnett claims that '[i]t was not until Literature in the form of story, romance, tragedy, and adventure had quickened her imagination that the figure of the Doll loomed up in the character of an absorbing interest' (p. 50), her phrase can be inverted in as far as it accounts solely for the Small Person's experience. That it is story, rather than literature or story-in-language, which Burnett identifies as the Small Person's primary interest, is clear when she recalls her frustrated bewilderment that her Nurse could 'learn a couple of verses of a song suggesting a story, and not only neglect to learn more, but neglect to inquire about the story itself' (p. 46). For the child, the language of the song is incidental to the story which it serves to communicate.

The Small Person is thus comparable with, but, crucially, a limited or—to use an evolutionary term—primitive form of the adult author. Jenny Bourne Taylor observes that *The One I Knew the Best of All* 'stress[es] the psychic and social role of play, above all, in the creation of *miniature* worlds.'[51] The miniature status of the Small Person's play, with dolls and with stories, connotes its limited, primitive status. The separation Burnett introduces between the writing 'I' and her diminutive Other self, the 'Small Person', likewise implies that the adult author has transcended the limitations inherent to the Small Person's miniaturised insight.

In writing about the Small Person, Burnett is therefore indulging in the same 'pleasures of miniaturisation' which, as Gillian Beer observes, were available to Victorian writers through the theory of recapitulation.[52] By playing a miniaturised version of adult activities, the Small Person in Burnett's autobiography, and the child in recapitulation theory generally, represents a primitive stage in an individuated (or miniaturised) version of progressive evolution. In other words, miniaturization, as depicted in the child's play in Burnett's and so many other autobiographical and scientific studies of childhood, implies both ontogenic and phylogenic progress towards the adult human as an end. Burnett's interest

in her miniaturised childhood self is an interest in the miniaturised version of progressive evolution offered through recapitulation theory.

That Burnett is specifically interested in the *progressive* evolution of her self is clear in the moment when the Small Person comes to commit her first story to paper, to make the transition from story to story-in-language. This moment is imbued with significance. Burnet recalls that she:

> felt very still and happy, and as if she wanted to say or do something new, which would somehow be an expression of feeling and goodness and—and—she did not know at all what else . . . She turned slowly to the exercise-book again . . . A delightful, queer, and tremendously bold idea came to her. It was so daring that she smiled a little. 'I wonder if I could write—a piece of poetry'. (p. 194)

The significance of moment gestures towards the ultimate object of Burnett's 'record of the principal events which influenced the mental life of a Small Person' (p. 241), which is to narrate the development of the Small Person into language and, synonymously, into Frances Hodgson Burnett.

The chapter with which Burnett concludes her autobiography, 'The First One', is therefore, inevitably, the account of her first publication. The end of Burnett's story is her transition from remembered child into present author. After this transition, Burnett claims that the Small Person 'had crossed the delicate, impalpable dividing line. And after that, Life itself began, and memories of her lose the meaning which attaches itself to the memories of the Mind of a Child' (p. 325). The publication of a story in language represents the beginning of Burnett herself, and therefore the end of the story which led to that self. The story of the child's progression into language is the story of the development of the self.

On a species level, language acquisition has similarly profound implications. Darwin claims that '[w]hether primeval man . . . when his power of language was ex_____tremely imperfect, would have deserved to be called man, must depend on the definition we employ',

and that it is therefore 'impossible to fix on any definite point when the term "man" ought to be used'.[53] Language is a sign, if not the defining characteristic, of humanity. Burnett's autobiography allows for no uncertainty on when language is acquired and, thus, on when the term 'adult' ought to be used. Since the Small Person not only represents any child but, through the theory of recapitulation, individuates her species, Burnett's evolutionism counteracts Darwin's. If the Small Person's growth is recapitulated in the development of the human species, it is entirely possible to fix on the point at which the process of evolution reaches its goal in 'man'.

Studies of language acquisition are therefore the spur for the invention of Child Study during the non-Darwinian revolution, because, as Burnett's autobiography makes clear, language acquisition is the ultimate sign not only of progress, but also of end. Burnett's resolution to the opposition between the childhood self with whom she both identifies, and has progressed beyond, is a progressive story of the inarticulate child's development into an adult with language. The theory of recapitulation meant that this story is not only consonant with, but actually substantiates, progressive models of species evolution. *The One I Knew the Best of All* is a story of the progressive development of the human race.

The same story of progressive evolution is implicit in Child Study. At the start of 'Baby Linguistics', Sully observes that 'scientific fathers have been taking notes of the first utterances of their children, with as much care as if they might be expected to contain clear reminiscences of that exalted antenatal condition which some philosophers have ascribed to the soul' (p. 111). The conclusion Sully draws from the connection between the child's ability to use his own name and his ability to distinguish his own father from other men shows that, once again, the significance Sully places on 'the babblings of infancy' is not as 'fanciful' (p. 111) as he first presents it to be. Biographical studies of children like Clifford have offered an insight into the relationship between 'that exalted antenatal condition' (p.

111) which, after Darwin, had to be attributed to the self, and the language which might be used to articulate that self.

As in Burnett's autobiography, however, that insight is qualified. If the child is defined by the absence of language, his insight is inarticulable. The development of Clifford's selfhood is aligned not with any insight into that selfhood which they have as inarticulate children, but with the acquisition of language which marks their entry into adulthood. This process is much more gradual than in Burnett's autobiography, but it is nevertheless a comparable model for selfhood. Like the Small Person, Clifford emblematises the primitive selfhood contained within the child mind. By articulating that mind, the adult can retain its unity and coherence, and register her own progress beyond its primitivism.

That language enables the adult's identification with and progress beyond the child is clear in Sully's analysis, in *Studies of Childhood,* of what he describes as the 'slow and irksome business' of acquiring 'pronominal forms'.[54] Sully suggests that the transition to the correct use of pronominal forms, and particularly to the use of first- rather than third-person pronouns in referring to the self, 'seems to be due in part . . . to a growing self-consciousness, to a clearer singling out of the *ego* or self as the centre of thought and activity, and the understanding of the other "persons" in relation to this centre'.[55] Not, he argues, that:

> self-consciousness *begins* with the use of 'I'. The child has no doubt a rudimentary self-consciousness when he talks about himself as about another object: yet the use of the forms 'I', 'me' may be taken to mark the greater precision of the idea of 'self' as not merely a bodily object and nameable thing just like other sensible things, but as something distinct from and opposed to all objects of sense, as what we call the 'subject' or *ego*.[56]

In this discussion of 'The Little Linguist' in general, Sully summarises the premise of his own analyses of the individual child mind in Clifford's biography, and the basis of Burnett's autobiography of childhood experience. Greater precision of the idea of the self is constituted through the expression of the child mind by the articulate adult who identifies with that child.

This same idea is evident in the discussion of childhood, selfhood and language offered in the most widely used textbook in psychology during the first decades of the twentieth century, Stout's *Manual of Psychology*.[57] Stout suggests that '[s]elf as a whole uniting present, past and future phases . . . [is an] ideal construction, built up gradually in the course of human development.'[58] However, this 'ideal construction of Self . . . is comparatively rudimentary in the lower races of mankind' (p. 226) because '[i]n the case of the lower animals and young children, it is impossible, and in the case of savages it is difficult, to obtain verbal descriptions of their own mental states and processes . . . partly because they either do not use language, or use language inadequate to the purpose' (p. 21). Language is essential for the 'ideational processes' through which moments of perception can 'unite to form a continuous system, such as is implied in the conception of a person' (p.266). 'Lower races', and their individuated equivalent, children, are limited to what Stout calls 'the perceptual plane' (p. 266) as far as they are limited in the linguistic capacities which enable ideation.

Consequently, for the child 'there is no single continuous Self contrasted with a single continuous world', because, for as long as the child exists on a purely perceptual plane, the construction of Self has 'never begun' (p. 266). Stout thus offers the attainment of language as the end to the story (or 'ideational process' [p. 266], in his words) of the self. His theory of selfhood resolves the opposition between the identification with, and Otherness of, the child. The adult must both identify with the coherent self of the child-mind, and have progressed beyond that child's primitive inability to use language. To resolve this contradiction in Victorian self-making by Burnett, Sully, and Stout, the child-mind is the primitive origin, and the adult's language is the end, to the progressive evolution of the self.

Conclusion

Darwin's contribution to natural history propagated a revolutionary debate about humanity in the Victorian period. In the standard text for psychology students in the decades following the publication of *The Origin of the Species*, language is the means by which a self-as-end can be constructed. The soul, refashioned in an era of evolutionism, is now the expression of the remembered insight of the Other, childhood self. In attributing to the child an inarticulate and therefore undivided perception of self, the Victorian origins of child psychology create a child who is a primitive yet unified ancestor to the adult. The child-mind might contain the undivided self, but it is, crucially, differentiated from—and a lower form of—that self. In other words, because of what Sully might call a 'gift of sympathetic insight' into the child's mind, certain adults—Burnett and other authors of children's literature prominent among them—can identify with the unified self as it existed in the mind of the child.[59] By articulating that Other, child-self, the adult can progress beyond it, and can thereby attain Jameson's ideal: the self as a progressive whole.

Autobiography has been recognized as a distinct literary genre 'since the late eighteenth century'.[60] That late nineteenth-century revolution in the genre, which produced so many works devoted to the recollection and representation of childhood experience, is too inextricably associated with Child Study to be recognised in the same terms. Similarly, psychology became an established and autonomous discipline during the Victorian period, but the affiliated practice of Child Study owed, acknowledged, and even celebrated a debt to contemporary autobiographies of childhood experience (and, indeed, to a broad range of other accounts of childhood) which must preclude it from disciplinary categorization. Victorian Child Study and autobiography of childhood experience are not so much nascent branches of psychology and autobiography respectively as they are amalgams, or what might now be called interdisciplines, on the theme of childhood.

Autobiography of childhood experience and Child Study can thus be understood as symbiotic, interdisciplinary studies of the newly necessary idea of selfhood in the Victorian period. By formulating specifically progressive model of ontogenic development, these discourses offer a self which replicates the most essential quality of the Christian soul, namely, the teleology with which it imbues the individual human life. For authors of autobiography, and for the psychologists with whom they were contemporary, the story of the self is a story of progress from inarticulate Other child to fully coherent adult. Since these disciplines studied the child as a miniaturised embodiment of the human species, they can be seen as responses to the revolutionary effect of *The Origin of the Species.* Child Study is invented, and autobiography radically reimagined through childhood experience, in the late nineteenth century, to substantiate an emphatically non-Darwinian view of human evolution.

Several questions are raised by this discussion of the connections between autobiography, Child Study and evolutionism in the Victorian period. Firstly, Burnett was viewed as an expert on children because she wrote literature for children. Jessica Straley has shown that a study of children's literature can inform current understandings of both childhood and evolutionism in Victorian discourse, but she honours a long tradition in treating children's literature as a discrete genre.[61] If two such seemingly distinct discourses as autobiography and psychology are so demonstrably co-dependent when it comes to Victorian studies of childhood, the far more dubious boundaries between categories of fiction should perhaps be treated with less respect.

An analysis of literature for children in comparison with canonical and scientific literature about children would offer a more fully synthesized picture Victorian debates on both childhood and evolution, by eroding anachronistic boundaries between discourses. There are, for example, clear continuities between Burnett's fiction for children and the more literary fiction about children written by her contemporary and acquaintance Henry James,

and between these disparate fictional works and contemporary psychological studies of the child mind.[62] The long-respected divide between children's literature and other literature impedes a full analysis of these continuities and, indeed, of the validity of the divide itself.

Secondly, childhood was only one of many subjects through which ideas about evolution were explored and consolidated in the decades following the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Childhood was complexly interrelated with another subject—race—which was equally central to Victorian evolutionism: the equivalence Stout invokes, between the savage and the child, for example, is ubiquitous in the period.

This may be because it legitimises a progressive view of the history of human life in which the white European adult is the pinnacle and end-point. However, Barbara Larson has observed that, '[d]espite the significant and expanding literature on Empire and the colonies'—including several recent studies of the child in imperial discourse—'no major study has been offered to date on the various strands of evolutionism and how this might complicate the representation of race during the Victorian period.'[63] Such a study could not be conducted without an analysis of the alignment between child and savage which was so central to Victorian ideas about race and about evolution.

This essay has argued that the Victorian origins of child psychology are evident in the extent to which ideas about progressive evolution inform emergent scientific and autobiographical studies of the child-mind in the period. This invites a broader study of the function and significance of childhood and race as co-constructed ideologies in nineteenth-century scientific, literary and anthropological discourses, and of the dialogue between these discourses and contemporaneous debates about the mechanisms for and implications of evolution.

[1] Peter Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 47.
[2] Deborah J. Coon, 'Salvaging the Self in a World without Soul: William James's *The Principles of Psychology*', *History of Psychology*, 3/2 (2000), 83-103, at p. 85.
[3] Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1790-1930* (London: Virago, 1995), p. 5.
[4] See Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (Oxford University Press, 2010), for a detailed overview of Victorian Child Study, and Katharina Boehm, *Charles Dickens and the Sciences of Childhood: Popular Medicine, Child Health, and Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), for an analysis of the dialogue between the sciences of childhood and their counterparts in Dickens's work.
[5] See, for example, the opening chapters of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1867), and of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). The earliest works in what is now known as the golden age of children's literature—Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), and George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), for example—were written in the same period.
[6] Jonathan Loesberg, 'Self-Consciousness and Mediation in Victorian Autobiography', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 50/2 (1980/81), 199-220, at p. 199.
[7] Bowler's is the seminal work on the subject. See also Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), on the role of non-scientists in promoting theories about evolution in the same period.
[8] Sally Shuttleworth, 'Inventing A Discipline: Autobiography and the Science of Child Study in the 1890s', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2/2 (2005), 143-63, at p. 144.
[9] Loesberg, for example, focuses on Darwin and Carlyle. See also John Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography: Studies in the First Person Singular* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Deborah Epstein Nord, 'Victorian Autobiography: Sons and Fathers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography*, ed. Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 87-101. Andrew Taylor, *Henry James and the Father Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), discusses autobiography in the work of Henry James. This research substantiates Epstein Nord's claim that a 'psychic and philosophical battle between generations' is 'at the heart of' many Victorian autobiographies, but neither it nor Epstein Nord's essay discuss the extent to which the divide between generations was figured as a divide between adult and child (Epstein Nord, p. 87). Valerie Sanders discusses what she calls 'the minor women novelists', but none so minor that they wrote for children (Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 2).
[10] Jenny Bavidge, 'Exhibiting Childhood: E. Nesbit and the Children's Welfare Exhibitions', in *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction: Worlds Enough and Time*, ed. Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 125-42, at p. 139.
[11] As Sanders has observed, childhood was one area in which women were permitted to have special expertise in the nineteenth century. See Penny Brown, *The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), for a discussion of childhood in women's writing of the period.
[12] See, for example, LuAnn Walther, 'The Invention of Childhood in Victorian Autobiography', in *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George P. Landow (Ohio University Press, 1979), 64-86, and the discussions of nineteenth-century autobiographies of childhood experience in Richard Coe, *When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). See also Sanders, pp. 50-74, on the ideology of femininity in autobiographies of childhood experience. None of these works discuss autobiographies by the supposed experts on the subject of childhood—authors of children's literature. The discussion of Burnett's autobiography in Brown, pp.125-8, is a notable exception.
[13] See L. M. Rutherford, 'Frances Hodgson Burnett (24 November 1846 - 29 October 1924)', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 141: British Children's Writers. 1880-1914*, ed. Laura M. Zaidman (Detroit: Gale, 1994), 59-78, for an overview of Burnett's work and its critical and commercial reception during her lifetime.
[14] See Lyubov G. Gurjeva, 'James Sully and Scientific Psychology, 1870-1910', in *Psychology in Britain: Historical Essays and Personal Reflections*, ed. G. C. Bunn, A. D. Lovie, and G. D. Richards (Leicester: BPS, 2001), 72-94, on Sully's role in the history of Child Study, and p. 77 for a useful summary of Sully's publications.
[15] James Sully, *Studies of Childhood* (London: Longmans, 1919), p. 2. Gurjeva discusses Sully's acknowledged debt to women's expertise on children and childhood (pp. 88-91), but does not discuss the use he makes of their published work on the subject.

[16] Sully, *Studies*, p. 16, n. 1. *The One I Knew the Best of All* was published two years before the first edition of *Studies of Childhood*, but the latter had in fact been written, and published in the form of essays in various periodicals, during the 1880s. See Gurjeva, pp. 78-81.
[17] Sully, *Studies*, p. 4.
[18] Anna Jameson, 'A Revelation of Childhood', in *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies; Original and Selected* (1854; 2nd edn., London: Longmans, 1855), 117-46, at p. 121.
[19] Coe, p. 76.
[20] Coe, p. 76.
[21] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 614. Coon describes *The Principles of Psychology* as 'a shaper of the developing discipline' of psychology (Coon, p. 88).
[22] See Stout, *A Manual of Psychology* (1899; 4th edn., London: University Tutorial Press, 1932), especially p. 525, and Wundt, *Principles of Physiological Psychology*, trans. Edward Bradford Titchener (1874; 5th edn., London: Swan Sonnenchein, 1904), especially p. 14. See Alan Collins, 'The Psychology of Memory', in Bunn, Lovie, and Richards, 150-68, on Stout's role in early psychology. Wundt, meanwhile, founded the first psychology laboratory.
[23] Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child*, p. 333.
[24] See Howard Helsinger, 'Credence and Credibility: The Concern for Honesty in Victorian Autobiography', in Landow, pp. 39-63.
[25] Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All: A Memory of the Mind of a Child* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1893), p.7. Subsequent citations will be given in parentheses.
[26] Sully, *Studies*, p. 16.
[27] James Sully, 'The Story of a Child', *Longman's Magazine,* 19/110 (Dec.1891), 200-14, at p. 201. Subsequent citations will be given in parentheses.
[28] Lightman notes that another Victorian popularizer of science, Lydia Becker, 'called on Darwin and Newton to help her make the point that anyone could make an important scientific discovery' (Lightman, p. 162). In his reference to Darwin, Sully may similarly have been attempting to legitimise both Loti's recollection, and the inference—the scientific discovery—which he himself draws from it.
[29] Coe, p. 41.
[30] Loesberg, p.199. See Sanders, 1-27, on the additional charges female autobiographers were susceptible to in the nineteenth century.
[31] Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a Discipline', p. 159.
[32] Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a Discipline', p. 153.
[33] Sully, 'George Sand's Childhood', *Longman's Magazine,* 15/86 (1889), 149-64, at p. 149.
[34] Sully, 'A Girl's Religion', *Longman's Magazine,* 16/91 (May 1890), 89-99, at p. 90, and *Studies*, p. 507.
[35] Sully, *Studies*, p. 513, emphasis added.
[36] Sully, *Studies*, p. 489.
[37] James Sully, 'Baby Linguistics', *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 14 (Nov. 1884), 110-18, at p. 111. Subsequent page numbers will be given in parentheses.
[38] Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a Discipline', p. 144. These essays initiated the wave of so-called baby biographies from which scientific Child Study emerged. See Wayne Dennis, 'A Bibliography of Baby Biographies', *Child Development*, 7/1 (1936), 71-3.
[39] William Preyer, *The Mind of the Child Part II: The Development of the Intellect* (New York: Appleton, 1895), p. 3.
[40] Preyer, p. 3.
[41] Preyer, p. 3.
[42] Sully, *Studies*, p. 160.
[43] Herbert Spencer, *On Education*, ed. F. A. Cavenagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 82-3.
[44] Bowler, p. 51.
[45] Coe, p. 252.
[46] Hippolyte Taine, 'On the Acquisition of Language by Children', *Mind*, 2/6 (1877), 252-9, at p. 253.
[47] See Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (1957; 2nd edn., Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), on this and other tropes in literary studies of childhood from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.
[48] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: Watts, 1934), p. 171.
[49] Gurjeva, p. 73.
[50] Coe, p. 252.
[51]Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Between Atavism and Altruism: The Child on the Threshold in Victorian Psychology and Edwardian Children's Fiction', in *Children in Culture: Approaches to Culture*, ed. Karín Lesnick-Oberstein (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 89-121, at p. 103, emphasis added.

[52] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983; 3rd edn., Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 99).
[53] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex,* ed. James Moore and Adrian Desmond (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 209-10.
[54] Sully, *Studies*, p. 181.
[55] Sully, *Studies*, p. 180.
[56] Sully, *Studies*, p. 180.
[57] Collins, p. 151.
[58] Stout, *Manual,* p. 268. Subsequent page numbers will be given in parentheses.
[59] Sully, *Studies*, p. 16.
[60] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (2001; 2nd edn., London: Routledge, 2011), p. 1.
[61] Jessica Straley, *Evolution and Imagination in Victorian Children's Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[62] See Roisín Laing, 'Candid Lying and Precocious Storytelling in Victorian Literature and Psychology', *Journal of Victorian Culture,* 21/4 (2016), 500-513, and Roisín Laing, '*What Maisie Knew:* Nineteenth-Century Selfhood in the Mind of the Child', forthcoming in *Henry James Review,* on these connections.
[63] Barbara Larson, 'Evolution and Victorian Art', in *Evolution and Victorian Culture,* ed. Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 121-148, at p. 143.